

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 LONDON 06294 01 OF 03 251938Z

67

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 EA-06

IO-10 ACDA-05 /078 W

----- 048811

R 251920Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0563

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

AMCONSUL BELFAST

AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

AMCONSUL LIVERPOOL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 LONDON 06294

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, UK

SUBJECT: IS THE UNITED STATES STILL A DEPENDABLE ALLY?
SOME BRITISH PERCEPTIONS

SUMMARY. WHILE POLITICAL COMMENTATORS AND LEADER WRITERS HAVE SPECULATED EXTENSIVELY ABOUT THE IMPLICATIONS FOR EUROPE OF US FAILURE IN INDOCHINA, LEADERS IN GOVERNMENT AND BRITISH PUBLIC LIFE HAVE QUIETLY EXPRESSED THE CONVICTION THAT EVENTS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA WILL HAVE NO ADVERSE CONSEQUENCES FOR US POLICY IN EUROPE. WHATEVER DEBATE ABOUT THIS PROPOSITION IS BEING CARRIED ON, AND IT HAS HARDLY ASSUMED LARGE DIMENSIONS, CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 LONDON 06294 01 OF 03 251938Z

SEEMS TO BE CONFINED TO THE PRESS. THERE ARE NO SIGNS

IN WHITEHALL OR WESTMINSTER OF AN AGONIZING REAPPRAISAL OF THE US COMMITMENT. STILL BOTH THE PRESS AND PUBLIC MEN IN LONDON SHOW SOME UNEASE ABOUT THE ABILITY OF THE EXECUTIVE TO EXECUTE A COHERENT FOREIGN POLICY IN THE PRESENT STATE OF TENSION BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT AND THE CONGRESS. END SUMMARY.

1. THE TRAGEDY OF INDOCHINA WHICH HAS PREOCCUPIED BRITISH MEDIA OVER THE PAST THREE WEEKS HAS PROMPTED LEADER WRITERS AND POLITICAL COMMENTATORS TO EXAMINE CLOSELY THE IMPLICATIONS OF EVENTS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA FOR U.S. FOREIGN COMMITMENTS AND FOR EUROPE PARTICULARLY. THESE ANALYSES, WHICH FOR THE MOST PART HAVE BEEN THOUGHTFUL AND MEASURED, HAVE NOT REACHED CATEGORIC JUDGMENTS ABOUT THE DEPENDABILITY OF THE UNITED STATES BUT THEY HAVE GENERALLY MAINTAINED THAT IN THE LIGHT OF EVENTS IN VIETNAM THE QUESTION OF AMERICAN CREDIBILITY IS NOW A GENUINE ONE; "THE WHOLE STATE OF AMERICA'S RELATIONS WITH THE REST OF THE WORLD IS IN THE BALANCE," WROTE ONE POLITICAL EDITOR.

2. THERE IS WIDE AGREEMENT AMONG COMMENTATORS THAT U.S. FAILURE IN INDOCHINA DOES NOT PORTEND THE COLLAPSE OF AMERICAN POWER IN THE WORLD. BRITISH PUBLICISTS DRAW A FUNDAMENTAL DISTINCTION BETWEEN VIETNAM AND WESTERN EUROPE IN TERMS OF THE SECURITY INTERESTS OF THE UNITED STATES, WITH A NUMBER OF WRITERS CONTENDING THAT U.S. ACCEPTANCE OF FAILURE IN ONE AREA DOES NOT AUTOMATICALLY LEAD TO LOSS OF WILL EVERYWHERE. WHAT IS HAPPENING IN INDOCHINA IS WIDELY REGARDED AS THE CULMINATION OF A PROCESS WHICH STARTED WHEN THE U.S. DECIDED IN 1973 TO END DIRECT INVOLVEMENT IN VIETNAM. THE PRIMACY OF U.S. INTERESTS IN EUROPE IS SEEN BY MOST BRITISH COMMENTATORS AS UNAFFECTED. BUT RESERVATIONS HAVE BEEN EXPRESSED ABOUT THIS PROPOSITION, NOTABLY BY THE ECONOMIST, WHICH EARLIER THIS MONTH IN A LEADER PORTENTOUSLY TITLED "THE FADING OF AMERICA," CONTENDED THAT THE U.S. DEFINITION OF ITS OWN INTERESTS IS LIABLE TO CHANGE PARTICULARLY WHEN THE PRICE OF DEFENDING THEM GOES HIGHER. THUS THE FAILURE OR INABILITY OF THE U.S. TO ACT DECISIVELY

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 LONDON 06294 01 OF 03 251938Z

IN INDOCHINA IS SEEN IN LONDON MORE AS AN INDICATION OF A POSSIBLE TREND IN U.S. POLICY THAN AS A CONSCIOUS SHIFT OF POLICY. MUCH ATTENTION IS GIVEN TO GROWING SKEPTICISM IN U.S. ATTITUDES ABOUT THE WORLD, THE ADVERSARY RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATIVE BRANCHES, THE PERCEIVED LACK OF CLEAR LEADERSHIP WITHIN THE CONGRESS, (A CHANGE OF U.S. POLICY TOWARD EUROPE COULD COME FROM ACTION ENFORCED BY CONGRESS, WRITES ONE

PAPER) AND GENERALLY TO WHAT IS DESCRIBED BY SEVERAL PAPERS AS AMERICA'S LOSS OF SELF-CONFIDENCE.

3. THE LONDON PRESS HAS BEEN UNABLE TO AGREE ON THE MEANING OF INDOCHINA FOR THE RELIABILITY OF THE U.S. BUT IT DOES FIND A LARGE MEASURE OF COMMON GROUND IN THE PROPOSITION THAT THE ANSWER TO THE QUESTION WHETHER THE U.S. IS DEPENDABLE MUST BE FOUND IN THE UNITED STATES ITSELF. AS THE TIMES TRENCANTLY PUT IT, "THE RESULT OF U.S. FAILURE IN INDOCHINA HAS BEEN A SERIOUS LOSS OF CON-

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 LONDON 06294 02 OF 03 251949Z

67

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 EA-06

IO-10 ACDA-05 /078 W

----- 048948

R 251920Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0564

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

AMCONSUL BELFAST

AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

AMCONSUL LIVERPOOL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 03 LONDON 06294

FIDENCE - NOT IN THE FIRST INSTANCE AMONG AMERICA'S ALLIES BUT WITHIN THE U.S. ITSELF. IT IS THIS RATHER THAN THE FALL OF VIETNAM THAT COULD GRADUALLY ERODE AMERICA'S INFLUENCE ABROAD IF IT IS NOT RESOLVED WITHIN A REASONABLE TIME."

4. IN CONTRAST TO THESE ANALYSES PUBLIC COMMENT BY GOVERNMENT LEADERS AND POLITICAL FIGURES ABOUT THE MEANING OF EVENTS IN INDOCHINA FOR US-EUROPEAN RELATIONS HAS BEEN SINGULARLY SCANT. NOT SINCE THE PRIME MINISTER'S STATEMENT DURING HIS JANUARY VISIT TO WASHINGTON ON CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 LONDON 06294 02 OF 03 251949Z

AMERICAN TELEVISION THAT AMERICA'S RELATIONS WITH MANY COUNTRIES ARE SO CLOSE THAT FAITH WOULD NOT BE IN THE SLIGHTEST WEAKENED WHATEVER HAPPENED IN VIETNAM, HAVE MAJOR POLITICAL FIGURES DIRECTLY ADDRESSED THE QUESTION OF AMERICAN RELIABILITY. NOR HAVE THEY DONE SO IN PRIVATE CONVERSATION EXCEPT WHEN WE HAVE EXPRESSLY SOLICITED THEIR VIEWS. ONE CAN NOW DRAW ONLY THE MOST TENTATIVE CONCLUSIONS FROM THE FACT THAT THE DOUBTS ABOUT THE RELIABILITY OF THE UNITED STATES DO NOT APPEAR TO PREOCCUPY BRITAIN'S LEADERS. ALTHOUGH FAR FROM INDIFFERENT TO THE HUMAN DIMENSION OF EVENTS IN INDOCHINA AND SHOCKED BY THE SUDDENNESS OF THE COLLAPSE OF VIETNAMESE FORCES, PUBLIC MEN HERE HAVE BEEN EXCLUSIVELY OCCUPIED DURING THE PAST FEW WEEKS WITH BRITAIN'S OWN PRESSING PROBLEMS - THE ECONOMY, THE BUDGET AND THE EC REFERENDUM ON EC MEMBERSHIP. NONETHELESS WHILE ABSORBED IN THEIR OWN PREOCCUPATIONS, BRITISH LEADERS HAVE APPARENTLY CONSCIOUSLY DRAWN A DISTINCTION BETWEEN WHAT THE PRESS CALLS THE FAILURE OF US POLICY IN INDOCHINA AND US RESOLUTION TOWARD EUROPE. NO AGONIZING REAPPRAISAL OF U.S. INTERESTS IN EUROPE IS UNDERWAY IN LONDON.

5. IN PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS OVER THE PAST FEW WEEKS BRITISH OPINION LEADERS HAVE STRESSED A NUMBER OF DISTINCT THEMES. NONE THINKS THERE IS A CORRELATION BETWEEN EVENTS IN INDOCHINA AND US POLICY TOWARD EUROPE. BY AND LARGE MOST OF OUR INTERLOCUTORS REGARD THE COURSE OF EVENTS IN INDOCHINA AS THE INEVITABLE OUTCOME OF A TRAGIC DRAMA. IN A SENSE BRITISH POLITICIANS WROTE OFF INDOCHINA IN 1973 WHEN THE U.S. DISENGAGED FROM DIRECT COMMITMENT. CERTAINLY THE MODERATES OF THE LABOR PARTY WHO ARE STRONGLY PRO-AMERICAN AND WHO BACKED US ACCORDING TO THEIR FASHION DURING THE VIETNAM WAR FELT THE GREATEST RELIEF WHEN THE PARIS AGREEMENTS WERE SIGNED. IN FACT THEY WELCOMED THE SECRETARY'S ACHIEVEMENT IN DISENGAGING THE U.S. ALL OUR SOURCES ASSERT THAT THE UNITED STATES

REMAINS STRONG, PROBABLY THE STRONGEST NATION IN THE WORLD, A POWER WHOSE ACTIONS AND VIEWS ARE AND DESPITE VIETNAM WILL CONTINUE TO BE OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE TO ITS ALLIES. A CLOSE ADVISER OF FOREIGN SECRETARY CALLAGHAN HAS OBSERVED THAT "NO ONE IN THE LABOR PARTY
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 LONDON 06294 02 OF 03 251949Z

OR IN SERIOUS POLITICS THINKS THAT THE U.S. WILL PULL THE RUG OUT UNDER EUROPE." THE MOST INFLUENTIAL TRADE UNION LEADER IN THE UK TODAY, JACK JONES, PUT IT THIS WAY: THE BRITISH PEOPLE UNDERSTAND THE CIRCUMSTANCES AND APPROVE THE DECISION (NOT TO SUPPORT VIETNAM MILITARILY), AND THIS WILL HAVE NO REAL EFFECT ON THE CREDIBILITY OF U.S. COMMITMENTS IN EUROPE OR ELSEWHERE. ONE MIGHT CYNICALLY SAY THAT BRITONS HAVE LITTLE CHOICE BUT TO CLING TO THE IDEA THAT U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN EUROPE REMAINS UNTRAMMELLED; IN THE NEAR TERM, AT LEAST, BRITISH WELL-BEING WILL REMAIN HEAVILY DEPENDENT ON CLOSE, CORDIAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE UNITED STATES. STILL, IT IS NOT INSIGNIFICANT THAT FAITH IN THIS COMMITMENT SEEMS TO BE UNQUESTIONED.

THE GOVERNMENT AND MOST PEOPLE CONCERNED ABOUT FOREIGN POLICY ACCEPT AT FACE VALUE THE ASSURANCES THE PRESIDENT AND SECRETARY HAVE RECENTLY GIVEN ABOUT THE FIRMNESS OF U.S. COMMITMENTS TO ALLIES. AT THE SAME TIME MANY OF OUR BRITISH FRIENDS WONDER ABOUT OUR CAPACITY TO EXECUTE A COHERENT POLICY - NOT BECAUSE OF ANY LACK OF WILL OF THE FORD ADMINISTRATION BUT BECAUSE OF OUR DIFFICULTY IN THE PAST FEW MONTHS TO FIND A DOMESTIC POLITICAL CONSENSUS TO SUPPORT OUR FOREIGN POLICIES. ONE SENIOR MINISTER BLUNTLY SUMMED UP THE PROBLEM BY REMARKING "THAT U.S. DOMESTIC TROUBLES COULD PARALYZE THE U.S. CAPACITY TO CARRY OUT A WORLD ROLE." THE EXECUTIVE-LEGISLATIVE RELATIONSHIP IS A CENTRAL CONCERN IN LONDON - MORE SIGNIFICANT THAN MISGIVINGS EXPRESSED IN THE PRESS ABOUT THE FIRM INTENTIONS OF THE ADMINISTRATION TO EXECUTE FAITHFULLY ITS INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS. OPINION LEADERS IN BRITAIN TEND TO DISCOUNT REPORTS AND POLLS ABOUT GROWING NEO-ISOLATIONIST TENDENCIES IN THE UNITED

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 LONDON 06294 03 OF 03 251954Z

67

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 EA-06

IO-10 ACDA-05 /078 W

----- 049046

R 251920Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0565

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

AMCONSUL BELFAST

AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

AMCONSUL LIVERPOOL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 03 OF 03 LONDON 06294

STATES BUT THEY DO SHOW CONCERN ABOUT A CRISIS OF
AUTHORITY ARISING FROM EXECUTIVE-LEGISLATIVE RIVALRY.

6. ALTHOUGH DEVELOPMENTS IN INDOCHINA HAVE EVIDENTLY
NOT RAISED DOUBTS IN THE MINDS OF BRITISH LEADERS ABOUT
THE DEPENDABILITY OF THE UNITED STATES, THEY HAVE HAD A
NOT ENTIRELY TANGENTIAL EFFECT ON US-EUROPEAN RELATIONS.
THE U.S. NOTE OF APRIL 11 TO THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT
URGING THE UK TO CALL ON HANOI TO CEASE VIOLATIONS OF
THE PARIS AGREEMENTS, AND THE ORAL U.S. DEMARCHE IN
DUBLIN TO THE NINE WERE CONSIDERED HERE AS ILL-TIMED AND
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 LONDON 06294 03 OF 03 251954Z

POINTLESS ESPECIALLY IN VIEW OF THE INABILITY OF THE UK
OR THE NINE COLLECTIVELY TO EXERT ANY INFLUENCE ON EVENTS
IN VIETNAM. THESE U.S. APPROACHES REAWAKENED DIVER-

GENCES BETWEEN THE U.S. AND THE UK WHICH THE BRITISH FOUND DISTINCTLY UNCOMFORTABLE. ALTHOUGH RELUCTANT TO RESPOND SHARPLY, THE BRITISH SAW NO ALTERNATIVE. EVEN HAD THEY WISHED TO BE POSITIVE, CURRENT LEFT-RIGHT TENSIONS IN THE LABOR PARTY WOULD HAVE INHIBITED THE FOREIGN SECRETARY. PRECISELY BECAUSE THIS GOVERNMENT ATTACHES SUCH HIGH VALUE TO HEALTHY RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES, THE BRITISH WERE UPSET AT THE LEAKS OF THE DISCUSSIONS OF THE NINE ABOUT THE U.S. ORAL DEMARCHE. THE FOREIGN SECRETARY HAS BEEN RELIABLY REPORTED AS BEING FURIOUS ABOUT THESE INDISCRETIONS, WHICH ARGUABLY SPRANG FROM ANTI-AMERICAN MOTIVES; HE SAW THEM AS ENCUMBERING A U.S.-EUROPEAN DIALOGUE WHICH HAD BEEN DEVELOPING SLOWLY PERHAPS BUT NEVERTHELESS STEADILY IN A POSITIVE DIRECTION.

THIS INTERLUDE IN THE RELATIVELY SMOOTH EVOLUTION OF US-BRITISH RELATIONS SUGGESTS SOME LESSONS FOR THE GENERAL RELATIONSHIP. WE AND THE BRITISH ARE BOUND TO DIFFER ON A NUMBER OF INTERNATIONAL ISSUES, IF THE BRITISH STAY IN THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY THE INCIDENCE OF SUCH DIVERGENCES MAY INCREASE. WHAT THE FOREIGN SECRETARY HOPES TO ENSURE IS THAT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE US AND THE UK OR THE US AND THE COMMUNITY COUNTRIES COLLECTIVELY CAN BE DISCUSSED CANDIDLY AND WITH A DEGREE OF CONFIDENTIALITY WHICH WILL BE THE BEST ASSURANCE THAT THEY CAN BE AMICABLY RESOLVED OR LIMITED IN CONSEQUENCE. ACTUATED BY SUCH CONSIDERATIONS, THE FOREIGN SECRETARY, WE ARE INFORMED BY ONE OF HIS CONFIDANTS, INTENDS AFTER THE RESULTS OF THE REFERENDUM ARE KNOWN (AND, THE GOVERNMENT HOPES, FAVOR CONTINUED MEMBERSHIP) TO TAKE A POSITIVE INITIATIVE TO PUT THE US-EUROPEAN DIALOGUE ON A FIRMER FOOTING. WHILE THE DETAILS OF SUCH AN INITIATIVE HAVE NOT YET BEEN THOUGHT THROUGH, THE IMPULSE IS CLEAR: TO PUT THE EUROPEAN-ATLANTIC DIALOGUE ON A BASIS WHICH POLITICALLY AT LEAST IS BETTER BALANCED THAN IT IS NOW AND BY BEING SOLIDLY BASED CAN TOLERATE DIVERGENCES BETWEEN THE US AND THE EUROPEANS WITHOUT LEADING TO UNPRODUCTIVE RECRIMINATIONS.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 LONDON 06294 03 OF 03 251954Z

RICHARDSON

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS, PRESS COMMENTS, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, FOREIGN COMMITMENTS, PUBLIC ATTITUDES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 25 APR 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: buchandr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975LONDON06294
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750146-0574
From: LONDON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750417/aaaaappl.tel
Line Count: 376
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 7
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: buchandr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 17 APR 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <17 APR 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <06 OCT 2003 by buchandr>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: IS THE UNITED STATES STILL A DEPENDABLE ALLY? SOME BRITISH PERCEPTIONS
TAGS: PFOR, UK, XG, XC, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006